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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS MASS SO SF

SUBJECT: NO SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS FOR SOMALIA

REF: A. PRETORIA 196 (NOTAL)

¶B. PRETORIA 103 (NOTAL)

Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet Distribution.

¶1. (U) South Africa will not send troops to Somalia, announced Defense Minister Mosiuoa Lekota January 25. In press comments following a meeting with President Mbeki, Lekota expressed support for the proposed AU peacekeeping mission in Somalia, but stressed that South African forces are already stretched thin with deployments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ethiopia/Eritrea. Sending troops to Somalia could jeopardize the effectiveness of these other missions.

¶2. (U) Lekota's spokesman Sam Mkhwanazi said the Department of Defense is currently looking at other options by which the South African military might be able to support the Somali AU mission.

¶3. (SBU) Institute for Security Studies analyst Henri Boshoff told PolOff January 25 that he believes South Africa may offer military personnel for the mission headquarters staff. They are also looking at assisting with the training of Somali forces and police. On the non-military side, the Department of Foreign Affairs is considering support for capacity-building for the Transitional Federal Government.

¶4. (SBU) Boshoff noted that this is the first time that senior South African political leaders -- Lekota, President Mbeki, ForMin Dlamini-Zuma, and DepForMin Pahad -- have publicly admitted that the South African military has capacity constraints. In previous crises, Mbeki promised to deploy troops even if the military told him they were not available, like in Darfur where South Africa has provided only 400 of the 750 troops promised for AMIS.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: While the SAG will not deploy ground troops to Somalia, South Africa is looking for other ways to support the AU mission. As noted in Ref A, we recommend funneling any concrete suggestions for South African involvement through the African Union or other regional leaders.

BOST